

REMARKS

This Amendment addresses the issues outstanding from the final Office Action dated July 14, 2008. Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

Claims 1-4, 8, 10, 11, and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mentani (USP 4,425,770) in view of Schelling (USP 5,988,679). Claims 1, 7-9, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mentani in view of Boersma (USP 6,149,526).

Without acceding to the outstanding rejections, Claims 1, 3, 4, 8, and 11-13 have been revised to more particularly recite certain distinctive features of Applicants' invention.

In particular, independent Claim 1 has been revised to recite, *inter alia*, that the steering column has an integrally formed bulging distance portion and an integrally formed steering lock mount portion. Claim 1 also recites that the bulging distance portion has flat side wall portions opposed to each other and a bottom wall portion connecting the flat side wall portions. Independent Claim 8 has been amended in a similar manner.

Mentani teaches a lock configuration with a circular lock mount portion and complementary contact surfaces of the lock bracket and steering lock. The Office Action relies upon Schelling for a teaching to modify the shape of the abutting surface of the lock mount portion and the corresponding contact surface of Mentani to arrive at Applicants' claimed invention.

Schelling merely teaches a guide rail for adjustably supporting a steering column. Schelling evidently does not relate to or suggest a configuration for a steering lock, especially a steering lock and lock bracket that embrace the entire circumference of a steering column, as does Mentani. Accordingly, absent the benefit of Applicants' present teachings, one of ordinary skill would not look to the teachings of Schelling as a basis to modify the configuration of Mentani's steering lock.

The Office Action alternatively relies upon Boersma to provide a shape modification teaching similar to Schelling. However, Boersma teaches a configuration for sliding components of a telescopic steering shaft, which are constructed to couple rotation therebetween. Like Schelling, Boersma is not concerned with a configuration for a steering lock.

Moreover, it is apparent that the applied references fail to teach or suggest the claimed configuration of the bulging distance portion, as now additionally recited in Claims 1 and 8. As noted in Applicants' specification (see, *inter alia*, page 6, lines 14-24 and page 16, lines 6-27), the provision of the steering column with an integrally formed bulging distance portion and an integrally formed steering lock mount portion enables a reduction in manufacturing costs and improved manufacturing tolerances over prior art configurations. Accordingly, Claims 1-4 and 7-13 distinguish patentably from the applied references.

Claims 1 and 8 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. The rejection of the claims is not understood since each recitation of "contact surface" in the claims is clearly associated with either the steering lock or the lock bracket (e.g., contact surface of said steering lock; contact surface of said lock bracket). Nevertheless, the claims have been amended to address the Examiner's concerns. Thus, at least as presently amended, the claims are definite and fully compliant with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

For at least the reasons presented above, Claims 1-4 and 7-15 are in condition for allowance, and an early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10243) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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January 14, 2009